

Message Text

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AMCONSUL DHAHRAN

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EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MASS, SA, YE

SUBJ: CONVERSATION OF DEP. ASST. SECY SOBER WITH COMMAND
COUNCIL CHAIRMAN HAMDI

REF: STATE 199146

DHAHRAN PASS SOBER

1. SUMMARY: HAMDI STRESSED THAT PDRY DANGER TO ALL ARABIAN PENINSULA STATES. WHILE PDRY BACKED BY SOVIET UNION, HELP OF YARG'S FRIENDS DISAPPOINTING. RED SEA WAS AREA OF CONCERN TO THEM, NOT JUST TO YAR. SOBER ASSURED HIM USG SHARES CONCERN OVER SITUATION IN AREA. HE NOTED HAMDI'S DISAPPOINTMENT AND SAID, FOLLOWING RECENT YARG-SAG TALKS ON MILITARY AID, USG THINKING OF SENDING SMALL MILITARY STUDY TEAM TO YAR. HAMDI STRONGLY WELCOMED IDEA. HE EXPRESSED SKEPTICISM ABOUT POSSIBLE SUCCESS EGYPTIAN EFFORTS TO MODERATE PDRY REGIME AND ASKED THAT YARG NOT BE FORGOTTEN IN PROCESS. SOBER STRESSED USG WELCOMED REGULAR EXCHANGE OF VIEWS WITH YARG ON ADEN REGIME.

2. NEA DEP ASST SECY SOBER, ACCOMPANIED BY CHARGE, CALLED ON COMMAND COUNCIL CHAIRMAN LTC IBRAHIM AL-HAMDI EVENING SEPTEMBER

11. CONVERSATION FOCUSED ON PROBLEM YAR MILITARY/SECURITY WEAKNESS IN FACE HEAVILY-ARMED, SOVIET-SUPPORTED PDRY.

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3. HAMDI SAID THAT ALTHOUGH HE SURE THAT SOBER FULLY BRIEFED ON THESE PROBLEMS, HE WANTED SHARE WITH HIM AS FRIEND YARG'S DEEP CONCERNS. HE STRESSED THAT YAR MILITARY HAD TAKEN POWER ONLY BECAUSE OF CRISIS CAUSED BY PREVIOUS REGIME'S INABILITY TACKLE PROBLEMS AND FIRMLY INTENDED RETURN RULE TO CIVILIANS AT EARLIEST POSSIBLE MOMENT. MAIN INTERNAL PROBLEM WAS TO ESTABLISH ORDERLY AND STABLE GOVERNMENT APPARATUS RESPONSIVE TO NEEDS YEMENI PEOPLE. MAIN EXTERNAL PROBLEM WAS THREAT FROM PDRY WHICH HAD ADOPTED COMMUNIST STANCE AND WAS RECEIVING MAJOR HELP FROM COMMUNIST STATES, ESPECIALLY SOVIET UNION.

4. HAMDI STRESSED THAT THIS THREAT WAS NOT AIMED AT YAR ALONE. LATTER WAS ONLY BRIDGE TO REAL TARGET, WEALTHY STATES OF PENINSULA AND GULF. FIRST PDRY WOULD ATTEMPT TO DEFEAT YAR BY MILITARY AND SUBVERSIVE MEANS; OTHER STATES WOULD THEN BE NEXT. COMMUNIST COUNTRIES HAD CUT OFF ALL EQUIPMENT AID TO YAR. LATTER HAD NOW REFUSED TO SEND OFFICERS TO SOVIET UNION FOR TRAINING. SOVIETS INSTEAD WERE POURING MILITARY AID INTO PDRY IN EXCESS OF LATTER'S LEGITIMATE DEFENSIVE NEEDS. VISITS OF PODGORNYY AND PDRY PRESIDENT ALI TO SOMALIA AND PDRY SEC GEN ISMA'IL TO MOSCOW WERE AN INDICATION OF SOVIET INTEREST IN AREA.

5. PROBLEM WITHIN YAR, HAMDI STRESSED, WAS SERIOUS UNDER-DEVELOPMENT. YARG HAD FEW RESOURCES OF ITS OWN TO ENLIST LOYAL SUPPORT ITS OWN PEOPLE. OTHER SIDE PROPAGANDIZED THAT YARG WAS DOING NOTHING FOR ITS OWN PEOPLE. YARG FELT CAUGHT BETWEEN INTENSIVE SOVIET SUPPORT FOR SOUTH AND SLOW RESPONSE OF YAR'S FRIENDS TO ITS NEEDS FOR HELP. WHEN RELATIONS RESTORED WITH USG, IN 1972, YARG PEOPLE EXPECTED SUBSTANTIAL AMERICAN ASSISTANCE. THIS HAD NOT MATERIALIZED. INSTEAD SOVIETS HAD RESPONDED TO THIS DEVELOPMENT BY STEPPING UP AID TO SOUTH, WHICH EVEN NOW BELIEVED THAT YARG GETTING SECRET AMERICAN MILITARY AID.

6. HAMDI SAID HE WAS SORRY TO BE ALWAYS RAISING SUBJECT OF AID, BUT SERIOUSNESS OF SITUATION REQUIRED IT. FOR EXAMPLE, YARG WOULD NEVER START WAR WITH SOUTH, BUT EVEN IN DEFENSE IT HAD ONLY ENOUGH AMMUNITION FOR SIX HOURS OF FIGHTING. HE FELT SITUATION WORTH DISCUSSING SINCE RED SEA AREA OF CONCERN NOT JUST TO YARG, BUT ALSO TO NUMBER OF ITS FRIENDS.

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7. SOBER RESPONDED THAT HE VALUED HAMDI'S FRANKNESS AND APPRECIATED KNOWING HIS CONCERNS. NOTHING LATTER HAD SAID WAS SURPRISING NOR WOULD HE DISAGREE WITH WHAT HAMDI HAD SAID ABOUT IMPORTANCE OF RED SEA. ITS SEA LANES HAD TO BE KEPT OPEN. IMPORTANCE WOULD BE REINFORCED IN NEAR FUTURE WHEN SUEZ CANAL REOPENED. USG FELT IT IMPORTANT THAT AREA REMAIN PEACEFUL AND THAT YAR REMAIN INDEPENDENT AND ALBE CARRY OUT ITS POLICY OF

HELPING OWN PEOPLE. USG SHARED SAME SENSE OF CONCERN OVER AREA EVEN THOUGH YAR NEAR AND USG FAR AWAY.

8. SOBER SAID HE HAD NOTED CAREFULLY HAMDI'S COMMENTS ABOUT MILITARY SITUATION AND PROBLEMS OF MILITARY SUPPLY, ESPECIALLY HIS SENSE OF DISAPPOINTMENT THAT MORE HAD NOT BEEN DONE BY YAR'S FRIENDS. HE OBSERVED THAT ABU DHABI-FINANCED ARMS SHIPMENT WOULD SOON BE ON ITS WAY TO YEMEN FROM US. HE HAD ALSO LEARNED OF RECENT SAG OFFER TO FINANCE PURCHASE OF WEAPONS. HOW DID HAMDI EVALUATE THIS OFFER? HAMDI RESPONDED THAT TALKS WITH SAG WERE LATEST IN A SERIES, BUT THEY HAD STILL NOT REACHED QUESTIONS OF HOW AND WHEN. SAG HAD SAID IT WOULD DISCUSS WHOLE QUESTION WITH USG.

9. SOBER MENTIONED THAT USG WAS CONSIDERING IDEA OF SENDING SMALL US MILITARY SURVEY TEAM TO YEMEN IN NEAR FUTURE TO CONSULT WITH YARG ON MILITARY PROCUREMENT NEEDS. THIS WOULD HAVE TO BE DISCUSSED WITH SAG, BUT HE WOULD WELCOME HAMDI'S REACTION IN PRINCIPLE TO THIS IDEA. HAMDI SAID TEAM MOST WELCOME AT ANY TIME AND HE HOPED IT MIGHT COME SOON. RAMADAN WOULD POSE NO OBSTACLE. HE NOTED SAG ALSO SENDING SIMILAR MILITARY TEAMS IN NEAR FUTURE.

10. IN CLOSING SOBER REVIEWED BRIEFLY USG ECONOMIC AID PROGRAM, NOTING WE HAD ASKED CONGRESS TO APPROVE SUBSTANTIAL INCREASE IN OUR ECONOMIC AID. HE REFERRED APPROVINGLY TO SUBSTANTIAL ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE PROVIDED BY SAUDI ARABIA, A VALUABLE MANIFESTATION OF THAT COUNTRY'S INTEREST IN YAR'S WELFARE AND SECURITY.

11. HAMDI THEN RAISED SUBJECT EGYPTIAN EFFORT TO MODERATE PDRY POLICY BY OFFERING HELP TO ADEN REGIME. HE STRESSED PDRY LEADERS WOULD PRETEND TO AGREE TO EGYPTIAN SUGGESTIONS BUT WOULD NEVER TURLY CHANGE OR MODERATE THEIR ATTITUDE. INDEED THEY COULD
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NOT SINCE THEY WERE EFFECTIVELY CONTROLLED BY COMMUNISTS. HE EXPRESSED FEAR THAT FINANCIAL SUPPORT FROM EGYPT WOULD ONLY MAKE PDRY LEADERS THINK EXTREMISM WAS PROFITABLE. HE HOPED GOE OR SAG OR USG COULD GET SOUTH TO ADOPT MODERATE POLICIES, BUT NOT AT EXPENSE OF HELP TO YARG SO THAT LATTER HAD WHAT IT NEEDED TO DEFEND ITSELF AND MODERNIZE COUNTRY.

12. SOBER REITERATED HE APPRECIATED HAMDI'S FRANKNESS AND THAT WE WOULD CAREFULLY CONSIDER WHAT HE HAD SAID. WE VALUED SUCH EXCHANGE OF VIEWS AND HOPED THEY WOULD CONTINUE. USG WOULD WELCOME YARG VIEWS AT ANY TIME ON ADEN REGIME, AND SPECIFICALLY ON WHAT MIGHT BE DONE TO BRING ABOUT MODERATION IN ITS POSITION.

13. COMMENT: WHILE POINTS HAMDI RAISED NOT NEW, HE CLEARLY WELCOMED OPPORTUNITY OF SOBER VISIT TO REITERATE THEM TO SENIOR

DEPT OFFICIAL. HAMDI BELIEVES HE IS PRESENTING WESTERN FRIENDS WITH OPPORTUNITY ELIMINATE SOVIET MILITARY PRESENCE FROM YAR, BUT HE NEEDS CLEAR DEMONSTRATION WHAT HE WILL GET IN ITS PLACE. HIS ATTITUDE IS DEMONSTRATED BY HIS IMMEDIATE POSITIVE RESPONSE TO IDEA POSSIBLE MILITARY STUDY TEAM. (WE URGE WASHINGTON MOVE AHEAD PROMPTLY ON PREPARATIONS FOR TEAM. OUR COMMENTS SENT SEPTTEL.)

14. POINTS MADE BY HAMDI ABOUT EGYPTIAN APPROACH TO PDRY ALSO NOT SURPRISING. HIS PARTICULAR CONCERN SEEMED TO BE THAT THIS MIGHT DIVERT ATTENTION FROM YARG'S NEEDS AND REDUCE HELP TO IT, MORE THAN A FEAR OF ENTRENCHING REGIME IN ADEN. NEWTON

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